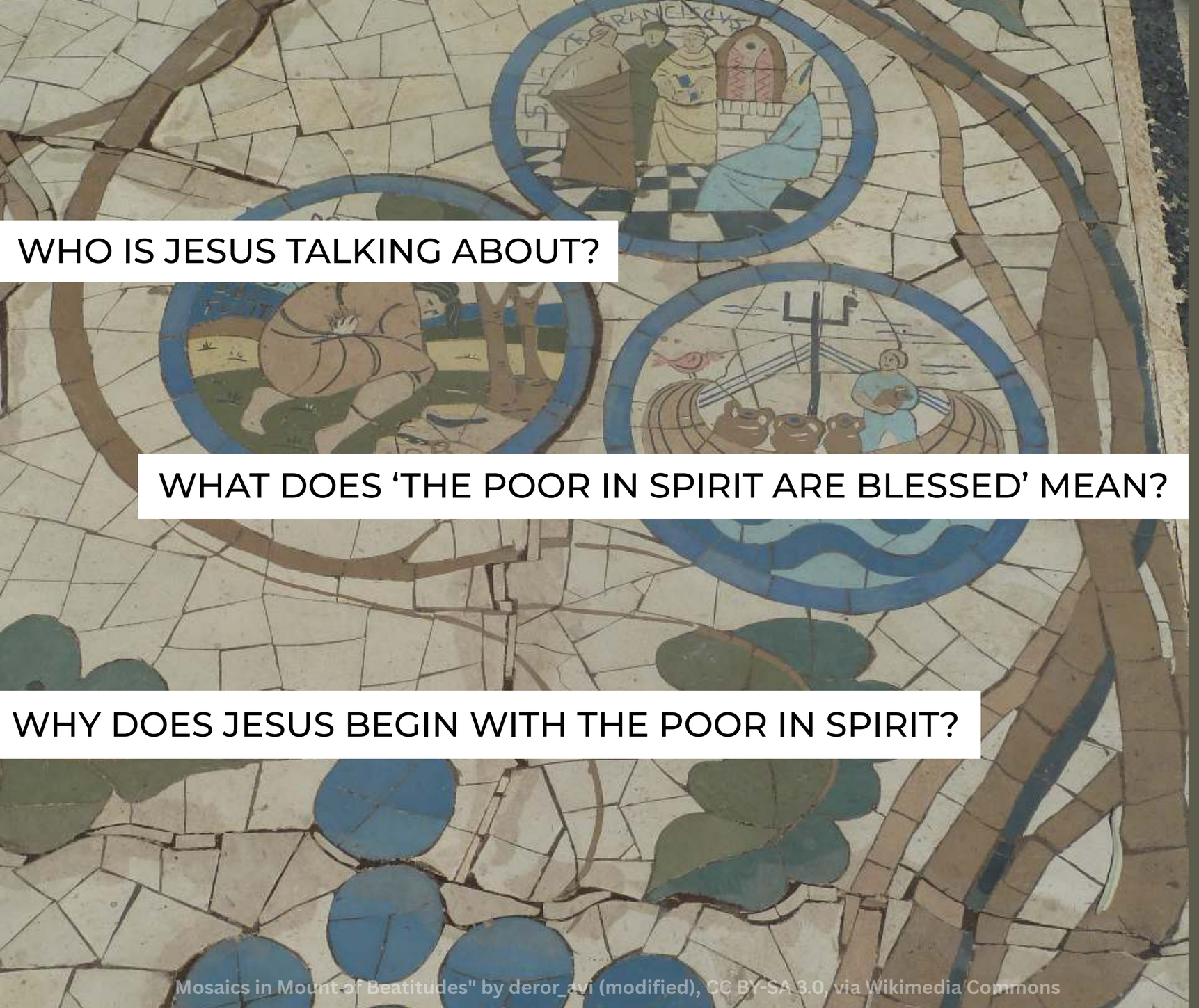


WHO IS JESUS TALKING ABOUT?

WHAT DOES ‘THE POOR IN SPIRIT ARE BLESSED’ MEAN?

WHY DOES JESUS BEGIN WITH THE POOR IN SPIRIT?

Mosaics in Mount of Beatitudes" by deror_avi (modified), CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Does Jesus want people to be poor in spirit?

Matthew 5:3

Matthew 5:3-10

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
Blessed are the grieving,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the makers of peace,
for they will be called heirs of God.
Blessed are those persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

The poem of the blessed - by Timothy Lewis

The dispirited are named,
The grieving acclaimed,
The tamed will reign,
Justice delayed.

What does it mean?
What did he say?
The kingdom is theirs?
Why are *they* praised?

Mercy redounds,
Integrity meets God,
People forge peace,
Slandered anyway.

What does it mean?
What did he say?
The kingdom is theirs?
Why *are* they praised?

Poetry is an art made of consciousness

– Carol Muske

Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood

– T. S. Eliot

Is Jesus asking people to become “poor in spirit”?

Is Jesus asking people to become "poor in spirit"?

usually we interpret it as YES

Is Jesus asking people to become "poor in spirit"?

this lecture demonstrating NO

usually we interpret it as YES

Is Jesus asking people to become "poor in spirit"?

No

We usually interpret it as if it's like

- Matt 18:3 ("humble oneself" ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν) &
- Matt 23:12 ("humble oneself" ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν)

But the people mentioned in Matthew 5 are not doing it to themselves (so "poor in spirit" might be more like humiliated)

Does Jesus want people to become "poor in spirit"?

No

There's a big difference between doing something to yourself (by choice) and having it happen (not by choice)

Does Jesus want people to become "poor in spirit"?

No

- We tend to assume that the eight blessings on this "list" are "virtues" (something good to aspire to)

those who are poor in spirit

something voluntary people do to themselves

something good to aspire to

the poor in spirit …

we find the same kind of phrase used in the sixth blessing: “the pure in heart”

those who are “pure in heart” are those who have a heart that’s pure — a heart without deceit

To be “poor in [terms of] spirit” is to have a spirit that’s impoverished — to have a depleted spirit

But it seems as if it is a good thing to be “poor in spirit”?

But it seems as if it is a good thing to be "poor in spirit"?

NO

not usually considered blessed / fortunate

YES

But it seems as if it is a good thing to be
"poor in spirit"?

NO

YES

Jesus says they're blessed
and the kingdom is theirs

But it seems as if it is a good thing to be
"poor in spirit"?

NO « » YES

not usually considered blessed / fortunate

Jesus says they're blessed and the kingdom is theirs

First thing Jesus teaches is

paradoxical

First thing Jesus teaches is

paradoxical

reveals our limited understanding
of how something is and yet is not

Lecture is in two parts

Part A

NO

Part B

YES

Usual questions for the “poor in spirit” (just get us straight to “the meaning”)

- What does “poor in spirit” mean?
- What is the meaning of μακάριοι οἱ (“blessed are the”)?
- What does the second clause mean (“the kingdom is theirs”)?

Key observations

- poetry
- two distinct groups
- 3rd person (perspective)

Paying attention to

genre (ceremonial poetry?)

patterns (word; structural)

narrative setting

the concept “spirit that’s poor”

Exodus 6:9

“Moses told this to the Israelites and they could not listen to Moses because of their **low spirit** and harsh conditions.”

מִ֥קֹּצֶר **רُוחַ** וּמֵעֲבֹדָ֖ה קָשָֽׁה

ὀλιγοψυχίας καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων τῶν σκληρῶν

“weak internal state”

Joshua 2:11

“We heard this, and our heart melted, and every man lost spirit” /
“a spirit no longer stood in anyone” (i.e. “all their courage vanished”)

וְלֹא־קָמָה עוֹד רֽוּחַ בְּאִישׁ

καὶ οὐκ ἔστη ἔτι πνεῦμα ἐν οὐδενὶ

The concept in Matthew

Matthew 4:2

and he fasted forty days and forty nights,
after which he was hungry

καὶ νηστεύσας ἡμέρας τεσσεράκοντα καὶ νύκτας τεσσεράκοντα,
ὕστερον ἐπείνασεν

Matthew 26:41

though the spirit is willing
the flesh is weak

τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα πρόθυμον
ἡ δὲ σὰρξ ἀσθενής

The concept in Matthew

the disciples are trying to stay awake

but they're not succeeding ... why not?

because they're tired ... is that bad or wrong?

it's naturally to be expected – it's late, they're normally not awake at this hour

let's not read it as if it's Paul speaking

The concept in Matthew

do they have the ability to succeed in this small task?

(Jesus is working on a bigger challenge)

Jesus offers an observation (not a condemnation)

there's willingness / eagerness (of spirit)

and then there's difficult physical challenges ahead

Jesus is sharing his methodology: prayer can boost one's internal state (as well as improve external conditions)

The concept in Matthew

there's much I still don't understand about Matt 26:41 but one thing is clear:

it would not be good (for Jesus or the disciples) to be depleted in spirit

it's better to have a spirit that's willing and eager (especially if the external state is weak!)

weak and vulnerable state
(weak in body)

but

strength of inner vitality
(ample spirit)

Proverbs 18:14

A spirit of a man can endure sickness.
But [with] a broken spirit –
who can bear up!?

רוּחַ־ אִישׁ יְכַלְכֵּל מַחֲלֵהוּ וְרוּחַ נְכֵאָה מִי יִשָּׂאֶנָּה׃

Proverbs 15:13

לֵב שָׂמֵחַ יֵיטִב פָּנִים
וּבְעַצְבַּת־לֵב רוּחַ נְכֵאָה׃

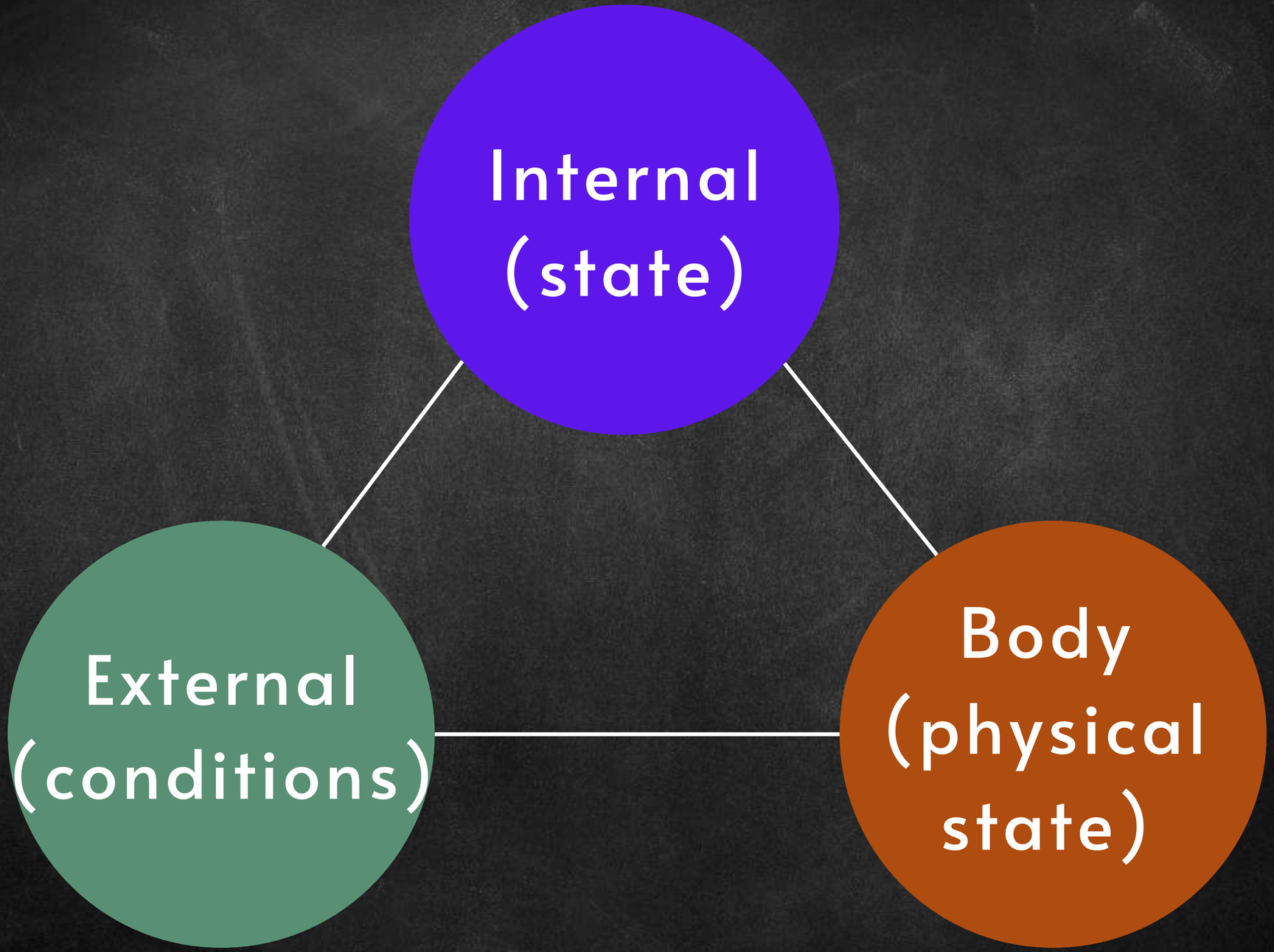
a joyful mood makes the face shine
but a sad heart crushes the spirit

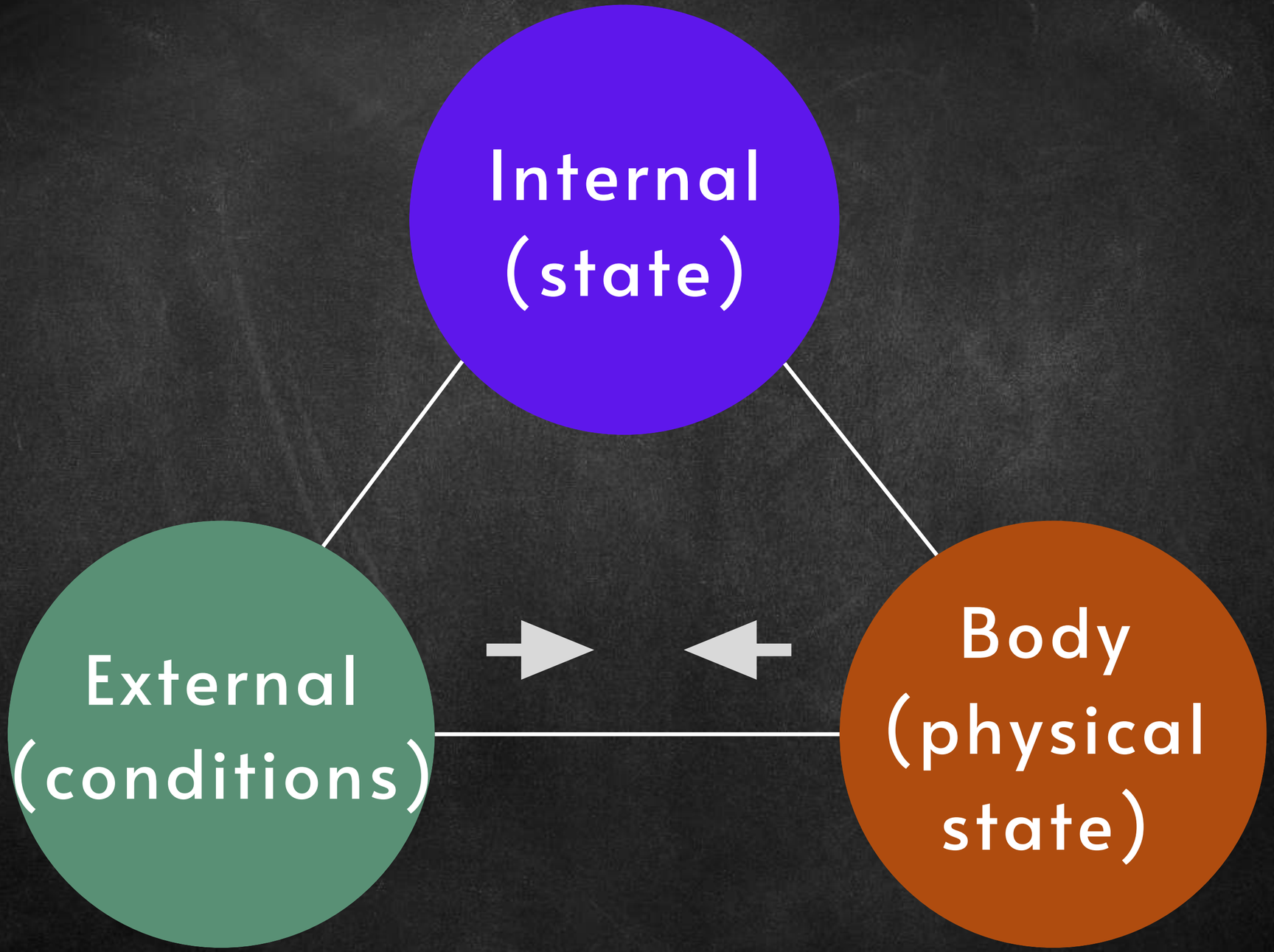
More literally:
a heart of gladness [makes] happy faces
with sorrow of heart, spirit [is] crushed

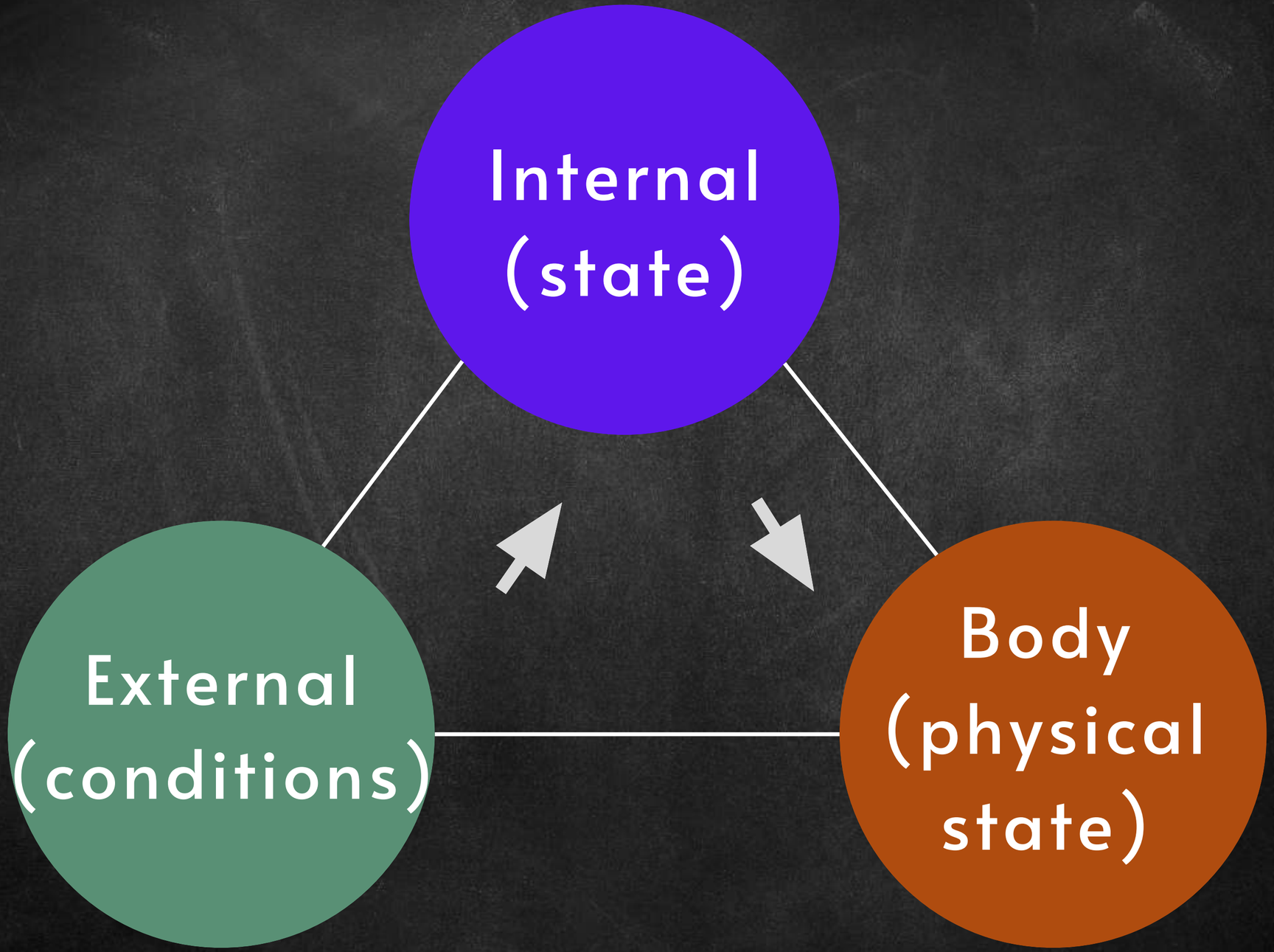
Proverbs 17:22

A joyful heart makes good health,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones

לֵ֣ב שָׂמֵ֣חַ יֵיטִ֣ב גֵּהָ֑ה
וְר֖וּחַ נְכֵאָ֣ה תְּיַבֶּשׁ־גָּֽרֶם׃


Internal
(state)
External
(conditions)
Body
(physical
state)


Internal
(state)
External
(conditions)
Body
(physical
state)


Internal
(state)
External
(conditions)
Body
(physical
state)

Job 7:11; 17:1-2

When Job loses his wealth, his health, and his children, he wishes he had never been born. His community no longer esteems him, even his friends think less of him.

I, indeed, will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the ***compression of my spirit****;*
I will complain in the affliction of my soul.

גַּם־ אֲנִי֮ לֹ֤א אֶחֱשָׂ֨ךְ פִּ֪י אֲ֭דַבְּרָה בְּצַ֣ר **רוּחִ֑י** אָ֝שִׂ֗יחָה בְּמַ֣ר נַפְשִׁ֑י׃

My spirit is destroyed*; my days are over;*
the graves await me.

רוּחִ֥י חַבָּ֑לָה יָמַ֥י נִזְעָ֝כוּ֗ קְבָרִ֥ים לִֽי׃

Lifeline Australia

Call 13 11 14

Text 0477 13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

Hours: Available 24 hours

Latin: *beati pauperes spiritu*

Stained glass by Édouard Didron (1881), Cathédrale Saint-Front. "File:Périgueux Saint-Front vitrail mur sud (3).JPG" by Père Igor is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

those who are poor in spirit

something voluntary people do to themselves

something good to aspire to

we need to take a closer look . . .

Matthew 5:3-10

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
Blessed are the grieving,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the makers of peace,
for they will be called heirs of God.
Blessed are those persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Patterns

The United Bible Society lays out these eight blessings as poetry.

Ministering to a Great Multitude
(Lk 6.17-19)

23 Καὶ περιῆγεν[1] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς
αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν
νόσον[2] καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν[3] ἐν τῷ λαῷ. **24** καὶ ἀπῆλθεν[4] ἡ ἀκοὴ[5] αὐτοῦ
εἰς ὅλην τὴν Συρίαν· καὶ προσήνεγκαν[6] αὐτῷ πάντας τοὺς κακῶς[7] ἔχοντας
ποικίλαις[8] νόσοις[9] καὶ βασάνοις[10] συνεχομένους[11] [καὶ] δαιμονιζομένους[12]
καὶ σεληνιαζομένους[13] καὶ παραλυτικούς,[14] καὶ ἐθεράπευσεν αὐτούς.
25 καὶ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ Δεκαπό-
λεως καὶ Ἱεροσολύμων καὶ Ἰουδαίας καὶ πέραν[15] τοῦ Ἰορδάνου.

The Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 5–7

5 Ἰδὼν[16] δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη[17] εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ
προσῆλθαν[18] αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ· **2** καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ
ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων,

The Beatitudes
(Lk 6.20-23)

3 Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,
ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες,[19]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.[20]
5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς,[21]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν[22] τὴν γῆν.
6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες[23] καὶ διψῶντες[24] τὴν δικαιοσύνην,
ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.[25]

[1] περιάγω *3s impf act ind*, go around
[2] νόσος, -ου *f*, disease
[3] μαλακία, -ας *f*, sickness
[4] ἀπέρχομαι *3s aor act ind*, spread
[5] ἀκοή, -ῆς *f*, news
[6] προσφέρω *3p aor act ind*, bring
[7] κακῶς, *adv*, badly (κ. ἔχω be sick)
[8] ποικίλος, -η/ον, all kinds of
[9] νόσος, -ου *f*, disease
[10] βάσανος, -ου *f*, pain
[14] παραλυτικός, -οῦ *m*, person unable to walk
[15] πέραν, *prep* + *gen*, across
[16] ὁράω *aor act ptc m s nom*, see
[17] ἀναβαίνω *3s aor act ind*, go up
[18] προσέρχομαι *3p aor act ind*, come/go to
[19] πενθέω *pres act ptc m p nom*, experience sorrow
[20] παρακαλέω *3p fut pas ind*, comfort

7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες,[1]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.[2]
8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ[3] τῇ καρδίᾳ,
ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.[4]
9 μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί,[5]
ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.[6]
10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι[7] ἕνεκεν[8] δικαιοσύνης,
ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
11 μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν[9] ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν[10] πᾶν
πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι][11] ἕνεκεν[12] ἐμοῦ. **12** χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶ-
σθε,[13] ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς[14] ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς
προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

Salt and Light
(Mk 9.50; Lk 14.34-35)

13 Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας[15] τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ,[16] ἐν τίνι
ἁλισθήσεται;[17] εἰς οὐδὲν ἰσχύει[18] ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθὲν[19] ἔξω καταπατεῖσθαι[20]
ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. **14** Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου. οὐ δύναται πόλις
κρυβῆναι[21] ἐπάνω[22] ὄρους κειμένη·[23] **15** οὐδὲ καίουσιν[24] λύχνον[25] καὶ τιθέ-
ασιν[26] αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τὸν μόδιον[27] ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν,[28] καὶ λάμπει[29] πᾶσιν
τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ. **16** οὕτως λαμψάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν
ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν[30] ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα καὶ δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα
ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Teaching about the Law

17 Μὴ νομίσητε[31] ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι[32] τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφήτας·
οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι. **18** ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν· ἕως ἂν

[1] ἐλεήμων, -ον, *gen* -ονος, merciful
[2] ἐλεέω/ἐλεάω *3p fut pas ind*, have mercy, *pas receive mercy*
[3] καθαρός, -ά/όν, pure
[4] ὁράω *3p fut mid ind*, see
[5] εἰρηνοποιός, -ου *m*, peacemaker
[6] καλέω *3p fut pas ind*, call
[7] διώκω *pf pas ptc m p nom*, persecute
[8] ἕνεκα, *prep* + *gen*, because of
[9] ὀνειδίζω *3p aor act sub*, insult
[17] ἁλίζω *3s fut pas ind*, restore flavor
[18] ἰσχύω *3s pres act ind*, be useful
[19] βάλλω *aor pas ptc n s acc*, throw
[20] καταπατέω *pres pas inf*, trample under foot
[21] κρύπτω *aor pas inf*, hide
[22] ἐπάνω, *prep* + *gen*, on
[23] κεῖμαι *pres mid ptc f s nom*, be located
[24] καίω *3p pres act ind*, light
[25] λύχνος, -ου *m*, lamp

5 Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσῆλθαν
αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ· 2 καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων,

The Beatitudes

3 Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,
ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες,
ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.
5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς,
ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.
6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην,
ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.
7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες,
ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.
8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ,
ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.
9 μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί,
ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.
10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης,
ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
11 μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν
καθ' ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ. 12 χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς
ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

36 words
36 words

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,
fortunate the poor in spirit

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες,
fortunate the grieving

ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.
for they will be comforted

affected by negative circumstances

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς,
fortunate the tame

ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.
for they will inherit the land

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
fortunate the hungering
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην,
and thirsting for rightness

ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.
for they will be filled

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες,
fortunate the merciful

ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.
for they will be shown mercy

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ,
fortunate the pure in heart

ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.
for they will see God

actively changing the circumstances

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί,
fortunate the peacemakers

ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.
for they will be called heirs of God

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
fortunate the persecuted
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης,
because of rightness

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,
fortunate the poor in spirit

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες,
fortunate the grieving

ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.
for they will be comforted

affected

future brings

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς,
fortunate the tame

ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.
for they will inherit the land

rectification

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
fortunate the hungering
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην,
and thirsting for rightness

ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.
for they will be filled

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες,
fortunate the merciful

ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.
for they will be shown mercy

future brings

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ,
fortunate the pure in heart

ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.
for they will see God

active

reward

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί,
fortunate the peacemakers

ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.
for they will be called heirs of God

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
fortunate the persecuted
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης,
because of rightness

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens

People who lack spirit

Those who have internalised their external circumstances
They have become disheartened, crushed by their difficult experiences and circumstances (become depleted in spirit).

They have, effectively, internalised society's opinion of their current position in life

lack of spirit

lack of ordinary life

lack of retaliation
lack of resources

lack of justice

giving mercy

dealing with integrity

making peace

putting things right
despite the cost to self

resulting desperate state (caused by circumstances)	active position (generosity / help)
lack of spirit	giving mercy
lack of ordinary life	dealing with integrity
lack of retaliation lack of resources	making peace
lack of justice	putting things right despite the cost to self

the second group are doing the sort of things
that the first group need

lack of spirit

lack of ordinary life

lack of retaliation
lack of resources

lack of justice

giving mercy

dealing with integrity

making peace

putting things right
despite the cost to self

two distinct images emerge

1st stanza

lack of power

2nd stanza

use of power

Who are they and why are they dispirited?

Who are they and why are they dispirited?

According to what we've seen so far, they are those who are stricken by tough circumstances

Let’s look at the narrative context

The first thing Jesus teaches
his students (μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ)
five teaching sessions
first session is public (outdoors)
poetry (and paradoxical)

Matthew 4:23 - 5:2

And he went around all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and heralding the message of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people. And the report about him went into all Syria and they brought to him all those who were sick with various illnesses and torments — demon-afflicted; moon-afflicted; paralysis afflicted — and he healed them. And many crowds were following him: from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem, from Judea, and from across the Jordan. When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the hill and when he sat down his disciples gathered around him and opening his mouth he began to teach them, saying

It's teaching on display.

Everyone is welcome to listen in on what Jesus teaches his students - to hear what he expects of his students.

In the five verses leading up to the poem we have

- Categories of people according to regions (e.g. crowds from Galilee; crowds from Judea)
- Categories of people according to illness (chronic afflictions; intermittent afflictions; chronic paralysis).

But the crowds can also be sorted into two categories:

"**they brought** to him all **those who were sick** with various illnesses and torments" i.e.

- Those bringing & those brought (those who need help; those helping)

the second group are doing the sort of things
that the first group need

lack of spirit

lack of ordinary life

lack of retaliation
lack of resources

lack of justice

giving mercy

dealing with integrity

making peace

putting things right
despite the cost to self

Who are they?

the poem is not restricted to the disciples - other people can easily fit either group

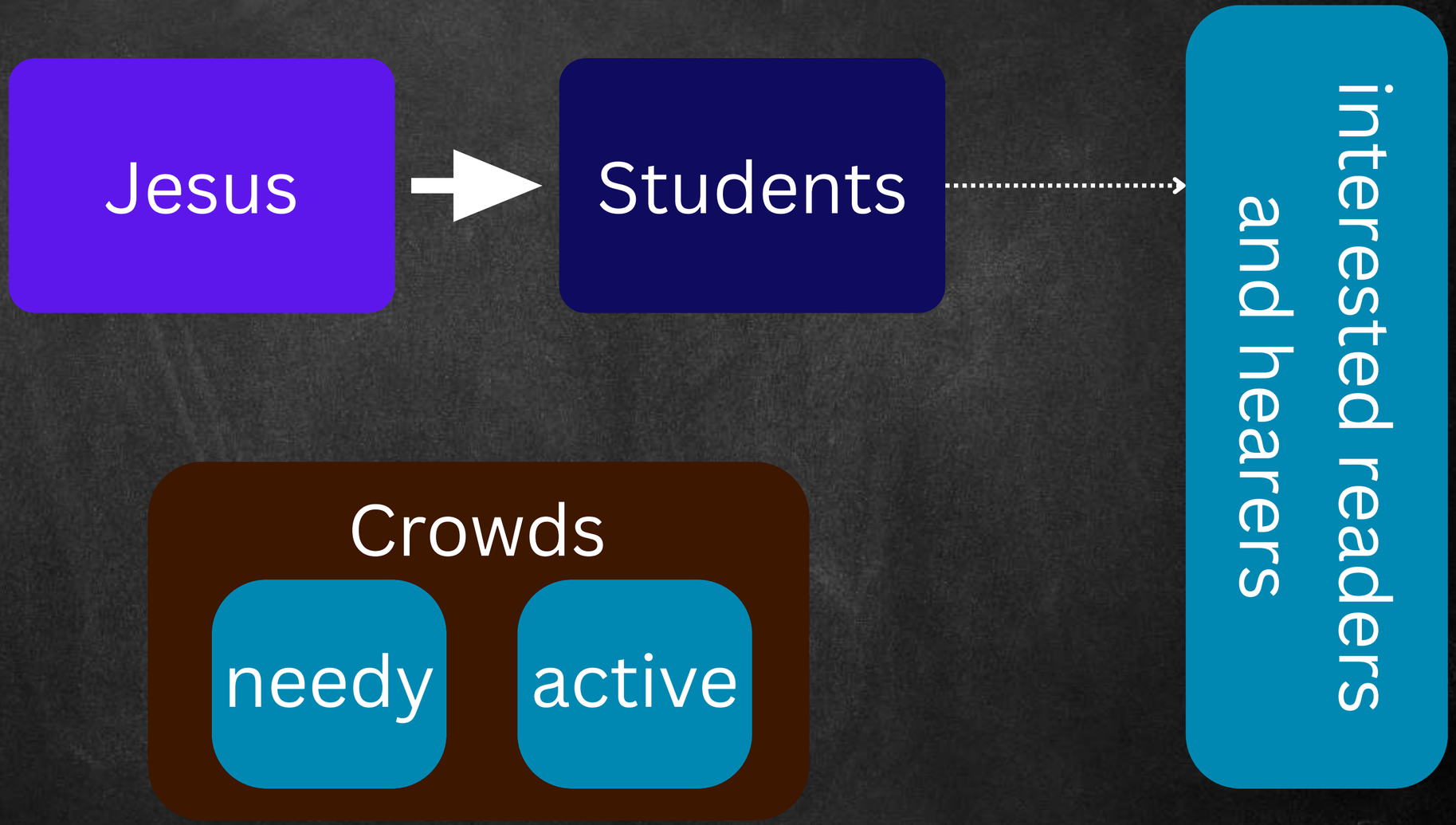
(verses 11-12 are about the disciples: "Blessed are you when you are persecuted")

Who are they?

In the poem, Jesus is speaking *to* his students but not *about* his students.

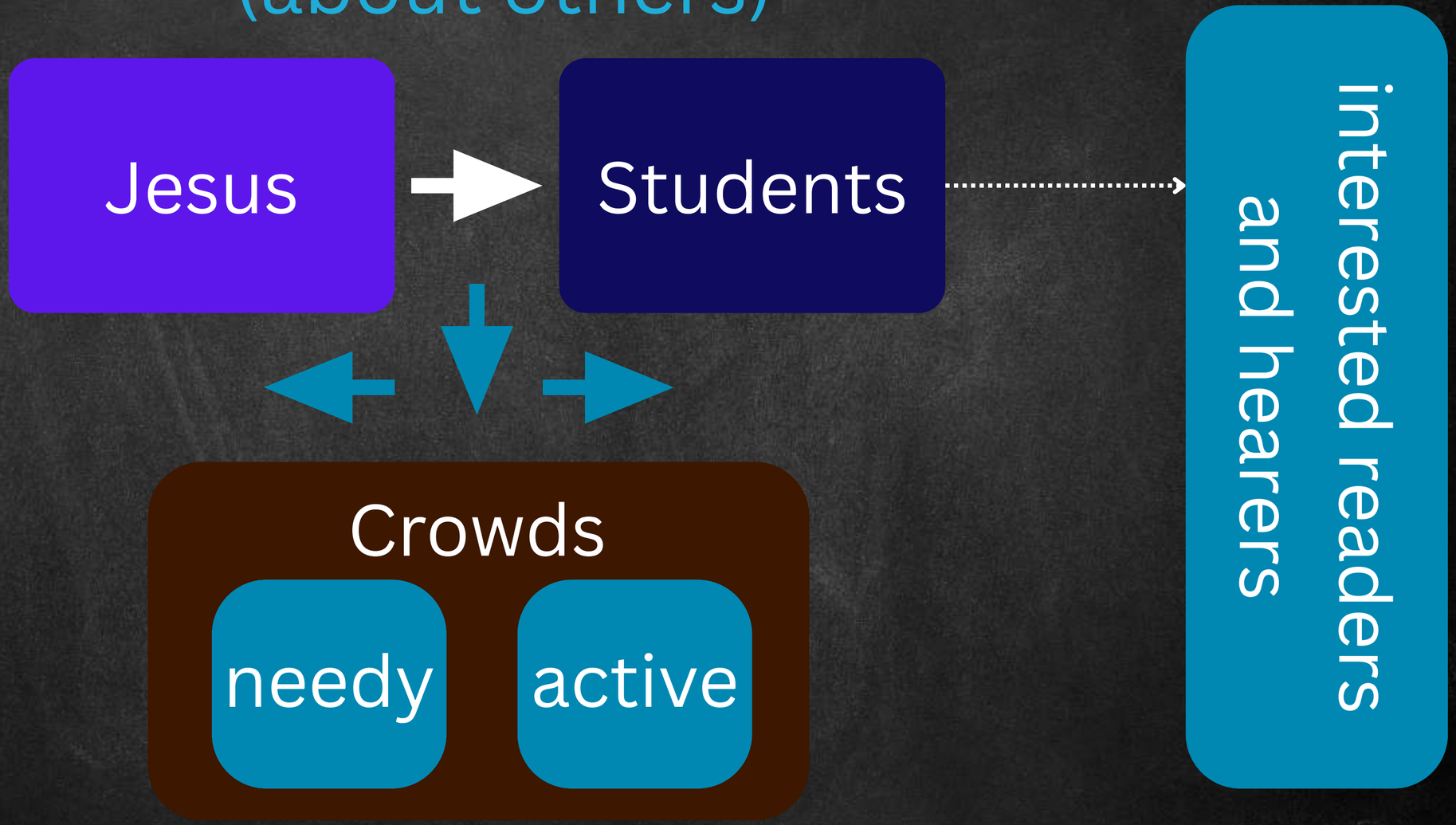
narrative setting

Jesus giving a perspective to his students



Jesus giving a perspective to his students

(about others)



Is it a good thing to be
"poor in spirit"?

NO

YES

not usually considered
blessed / fortunate

Jesus says they're blessed
and the kingdom is theirs

Is it a good thing to be
"poor in spirit"?

NO

YES

not usually considered
blessed / fortunate

Jesus says they're blessed
and the kingdom is theirs

If the dispirited are unfortunate . . .

Why is Jesus saying they are blessed and the kingdom is theirs?

Honoured are those who have lost hope — how so? — The greatest kingdom is theirs.
Honoured are those who have lost loved ones — how so? — They will find consolation.
Honoured are those who lack resources — how so? — The whole earth will be their inheritance.
Honoured are those who are longing to see the right thing done — how so? — They will find satisfaction.
Honoured are those who show mercy — how so? — They themselves will be shown mercy.
Honoured are those who act with integrity — how so? — They will see God.
Honoured are those who create peace — how so? — They will be renowned as God's own.
Honoured are those who are persecuted for doing the right thing — how so? — The greatest kingdom is theirs.

Honoured are *you* when *you* are the ones being
and *your* name reviled because of me — celebr
honour — your renown is great in the heavens —
same honour experienced by the prophets ahe

Honoured are those who have lost hope — how so? — The greatest kingdom is theirs.
Honoured are those who have lost loved ones — how so? — They will find consolation.
Honoured are those who lack resources — how so? — The whole earth will be their inheritance.
Honoured are those who are longing to see the right thing done — how so? — They will find satisfaction.

Honoured are those who show mercy — how so? — They themselves will be shown mercy.
Honoured are those who act with integrity — how so? — They will see God.
Honoured are those who create peace — how so? — They will be renowned as God's own.
Honoured are those who are persecuted for doing the right thing — how so? — The greatest kingdom is theirs.

Honoured are *you* when *you* are the ones being persecuted and *your* name reviled because of me — celebrate this as an honour — your renown is great in the heavens — this is the same honour experienced by the prophets ahead of you.

Amen

- Each statement in our poem is using logic
- But not explaining all of its logic
- Each line is an enthymeme where part of the logic relies on the audience's emotions and perspectives (shared assumptions with the speaker's audience)
- Saying something "not obvious" (to everyone) is part of the "logic" - those Jesus are declaring as "fortunate" are not who most of society would label "fortunate"

Not agreeable

In other words, it's not supposed to sound easy for everyone to agree with.

It's supposed to be understandable *to those who are already willing to disagree with the usual logic of society*
(e.g. to those who are already in the groups of people that Jesus is talking about).

Not agreeable

The reason it sounds so contradictory to the dominant way society thinks is because that's the point – it's deliberately provocative.

Who (or what) is it provoking?

A variety of angles

Jesus is saying it —— Jesus is authorised to speak about the kingdom

Jesus is honouring such people by saying it

Jesus has already been honouring those in desperate need of help by healing those brought to him

The word for "blessed" here is not the word for "giving/endowing blessing (to someone)" εὐλογέω / בָּרוּךְ

Instead here it's μακάριος / אַשְׁרֵי
This is someone giving their own perspective of what they perceive is already exists ("these folks have it good ... wouldn't you agree?!") How good it is to be them! Who wouldn't want to be them?! They have something good!

The first and final lines of the poem don't fully explain the reason – they simply assert an even a more difficult-to-understand statement:

"the kingdom of the heavens is [already] theirs"

Really? How so?

The 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th lines are easier to understand: Jesus says they are actually in a good position because something will shift (in future) and everyone will eventually see "Ah yes! This really has been a good position to be in! What an honour to be them!"

But, in lines 1 and 8, for those deficient in spirit and for those being persecuted for doing what right … there is no future point-of-change mentioned …

It would have been easier if it were "the kingdom will be theirs"

But instead – it "is theirs" already

Simple interpretation

The depleted in spirit (and the persecuted) are being called citizens of the greatest kingdom

Notice the deliberate mismatch between the exclamation of "fortunate they are" and the first four labels of unfortunate positions to be in!

notice who are missing from the categories

Who Jesus is NOT naming as honoured

Jesus is not commending and celebrating those who are usually considered honoured in society. Those who are usually considered "the fortunate" are those who have the most resources, power and/or privilege;

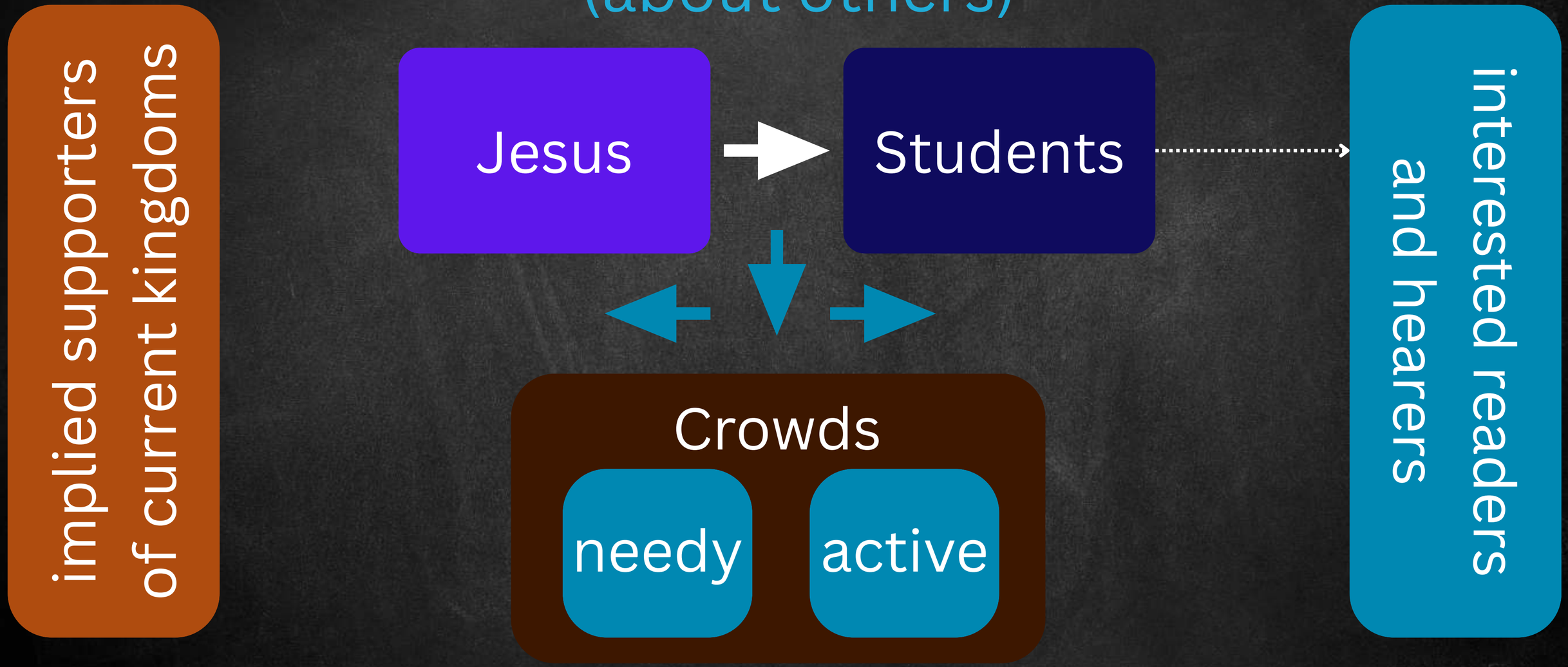
- the wealthy landowners
- those who fund buildings or have buildings named after them
- the temple priests
- those who get invited to royal banquets
- those who everyone wants to greet in the marketplace
- those who are respected leaders

Shared unstated assumption:

By stating something obviously so counter-cultural and counter-factual (saying the unfortunate are fortunate) Jesus' audience is expected to understand his point - namely: he is not validating the current system (or those who benefit from it) instead he is commending something very different

Jesus giving a perspective to his students

(about others)



Jesus commends to his disciples those:

- who are without power (the desperate); and
- who use their power responsibly (beneficently on behalf of others - for those in need)

In other words, Jesus is commending those who don't benefit from or support the current system

the folks that Jesus names are those who are ready for a new system - a greater kingdom

Why are there so many folks who are ill?

This reflects a flawed system

True prosperity is when the whole society is healthy and the system works to benefit all (Deut 15:4-5; Psalm 72; Isaiah 1:16-17; Zech 8:4-5; Psalm 85:10-12)

Why are there so many folks who are ill?

By healing people, Jesus is exposing a problem with the current system

Why are there so many folks who are ill?

If these regions were to create a tourism brochure saying "Come visit our great land!" they would not mention "we've got many people suffering and who are desperate for better conditions"

Jesus' actions and words imply critique of the system

Why are there so many folks who are ill?

The first category of people Jesus names ("those who lack spirit") are those that the dominant kingdom doesn't proudly claim as theirs

Jesus says "the greater kingdom claims them"

"For theirs is the kingdom"

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

compare:

"for *yours* is the kingdom"

ὅτι σοῦ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

"for the Lord's is the kingdom"

ὅτι τοῦ κυρίου ἡ βασιλεία (LXX Ps 21:29)

“For theirs is the kingdom”

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

very high praise being given (by Jesus)
to those accorded with low status (by society)

there is precedent for God being concerned about re-invigorating the poor in spirit (e.g. Isaiah 66:1-2; “[God] pays attention to the poor and crushed in spirit”; Isaiah 57:15 God says “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with the crushed and lowly in spirit”; Ps 34:18 “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those crushed in spirit”)

"For theirs is the kingdom"

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

But to use an expression usually reserved for God!

How can they (with their lack of power) be praised in the same way God is praised?

"For theirs is the kingdom"

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

Partial answer:

Those who don't have power (lack of spirit) within the current kingdoms of the world have a greater kingdom.

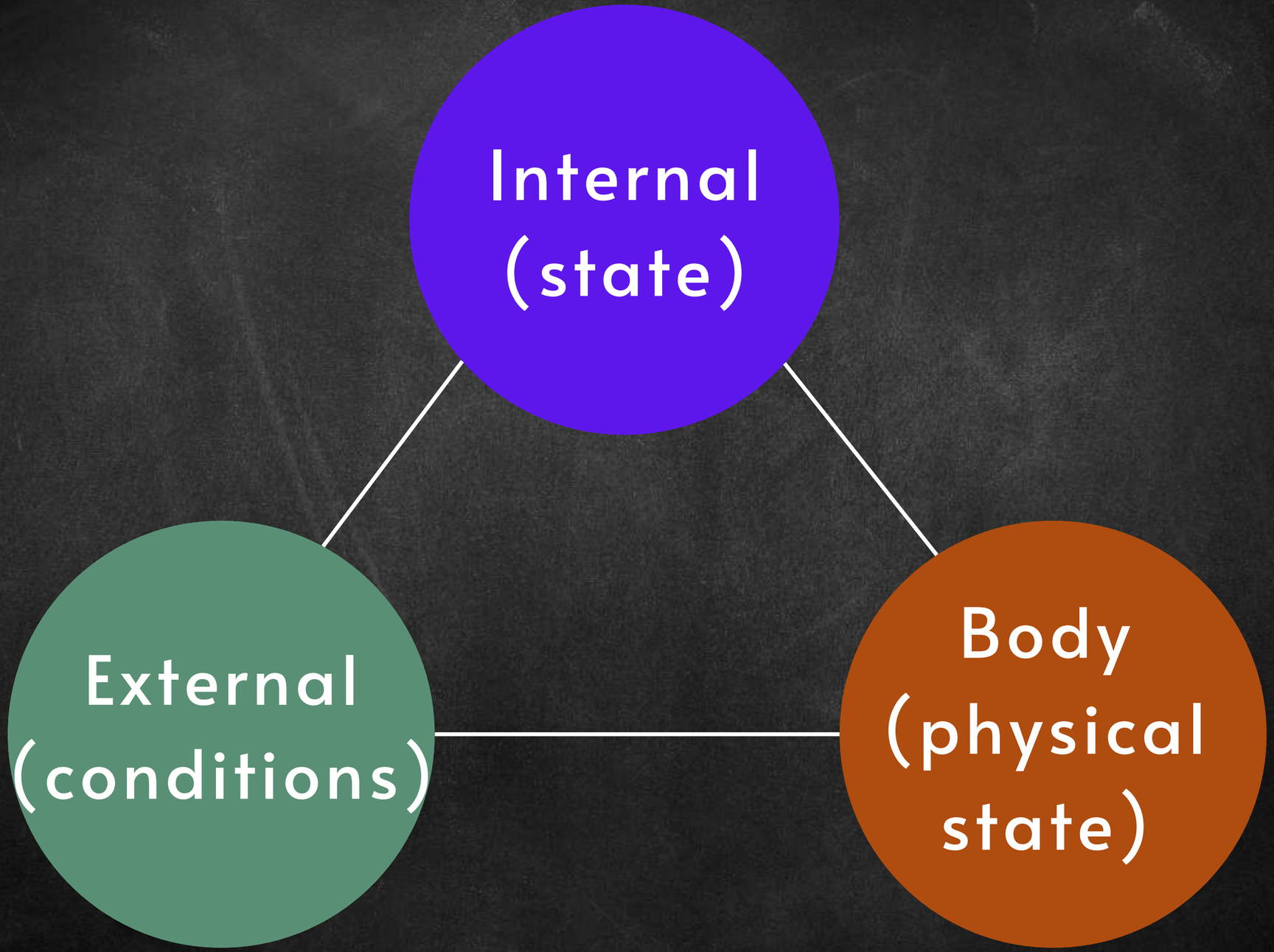
Those who don't have prestige (persecuted) in the current kingdoms of the world have a greater kingdom.

"For theirs is the kingdom"

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

(remember the same expression is also applied to those who do what's right despite being persecuted)

So our solution needs to take both into consideration (lines 1 and 8 of the poem).


Internal
(state)
External
(conditions)
Body
(physical
state)

depletion of spirit

lack of internal strength
(because of
circumstances)
internalisation of
external lack of power
(“defeated”)

having power to help

showing external
strength
showing internal
strength

lack of justice:
resisting internalising

persecuted:
external pressure increase

Jesus creates a circular poem

Showing mercy; refusing to exploit others; de-escalating hostility; being persecuted for doing what's right

they have not only agency and external resources but they are have internal strength

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,
fortunate the poor in spirit

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες,
fortunate the grieving

ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.
for they will be comforted

affected by negative circumstances

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς,
fortunate the tame

ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.
for they will inherit the land

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
fortunate the hungering
καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην,
and thirsting for rightness

ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.
for they will be filled

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες,
fortunate the merciful

ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.
for they will be shown mercy

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ,
fortunate the pure in heart

ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.
for they will see God

actively changing the circumstances

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί,
fortunate the peacemakers

ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.
for they will be called heirs of God

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι
fortunate the persecuted
ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης,
because of rightness

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens

When persecutors persecute, the point is to devalue and demote the persecuted (the opposite of honouring) to make the persecuted feel worthless and powerless.

If the persecuted internalise this ... where do they find themselves?

In the first group, along with those lacking spirit

This is why the final line corresponds to first line

A circular poem

The more such people identify with what's right (showing mercy; refusing to exploit others; de-escalating hostility around them), the more they may also be risking their own status and own internal well-being. They may even begin to internalise society's opinion of them and become disheartened and crushed by such experiences (becoming poor in spirit).

But when society tells them they're worthless, Jesus says, No they're not worthless, the kingdom of the heavens values and honours them!

Jesus is not showing support for the dominant system
He is showing solidarity with the weak and lowly

Proverbs 16:19

Better [to be] a lowly spirit with the poor
than dividing the spoil with the proud.

opposite of “dividing the spoils” (conquering and plundering) is:

שְׁפַל־רֽוּחַ

a lowly spirit

"For theirs is the kingdom"

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

We still haven't fully answered the question:

Why is Jesus saying that they *already* have it?

"For theirs is the kingdom"

How can the depleted of spirit represent the kingdom?

"For theirs is the kingdom"

They are not only the kingdom's "first citizens" — the kingdom itself "is theirs."

“For theirs is the kingdom”

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

Surely having a crushed spirit is not ideal (feeling defeated by society?)!

“For theirs is the kingdom”

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

Why is Jesus saying that they already have it good and they already have the kingdom?

“For theirs is the kingdom”

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία

For those of us who have not experienced being in such a weak state, then this isn’t actually understandable.

Jesus is saying something that only some people understand - those who know powerlessness understand.

They have a perspective that some of us cannot understand. For those who are in the second group (with agency) they might not know it first-hand and that's okay. Jesus honours both groups.

In fact it is easier to understand how the second group (the group with agency) represent the kingdom (the beneficent are expressing the kingdom).

But how can the powerless also represent what the kingdom is?

The implication is that

The kingdom is, likewise, unrecognised, vulnerable, weak and un-entitled.

This is almost as far as I have managed to get with resolving our initial paradox: How can Jesus say that the unfortunate are fortunate.

We now run into an even larger paradox:

How can the greatest kingdom of all be both *with* and *without* power?

So just as Jesus' poem contains two main groups (one desperate "without power" and one beneficently "generous with power") the kingdom itself is expressed as both powerless and powerful.

We now run into an even larger paradox:

How can the greatest kingdom of all be both *with* and *without* power?

There is another passage in Matthew which may assist us with our poem. It shares the same deep structure.

Matthew 25:31-46

I’m probably not the only person who has been puzzled by the final piece thing Jesus teaches to his students in his fifth and final teaching session.

He is talking about a final judgement of all nations and apparently it’s all based on how the nations have treated their most vulnerable members of society.

So it comes down to just one criteria: Have they treated them well (have they treated them as though they were the divine human figure who is now judging them? So that’s it?

Seems too simple. Why didn’t Jesus mention this earlier? Well, as we look closer at the first thing Jesus teaches (the poem) and the final thing Jesus teaches (the criteria for judging the nations) we see the same deep structure - the same underlying patterning

Matthew 25:31-46

Just as Jesus' poem identified the kingdom with both those without power and those using their power to help the powerless.

- We see a strong identification between the kingdom and the weak and vulnerable.
- And we see that it's both the beneficent (feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting those who are sick or in prison) AND those who are the ones in these desperate states. The kingdom is both that which helps those in need and that which is those in need.

Let the mountains restore peace for your people
and the hills, in righteousness.
May your king bring justice for the poor of the people
and save the children of the needy
and humble an extortioner.
May he be renowned for rescuing a poor one from a mighty one
and a needy one who has no helper,
May he spare the poor and needy,
and the lives of the needy may he save.
From usury and from injustice may he redeem them in full,
and honoured be their name in his sight. (LXX Ps 71:3-4,12-14)

The New Colossus - Emma Lazarus - 1883

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Jesus' poem creates something.

So yes, it is because Jesus says it.

And we also say it and as we join in with saying it we are co-creating the liturgical reality with the power to transform ourselves and the world around us, as we enter this poem of the kingdom.

Why does Jesus begin with poetry?

- It's invitational rather than simply instructional
- It can say more with less: Jesus uses a genre that is densely rich (compact) with what it contains
- It uses a form that lends itself to liturgical use (just like we have the Lord's Prayer, here we have the Lord's Poem

Why does Jesus begin with poetry?

- Poetry is a verbal art that communicates at a heart level

Why does Jesus begin with “poor in spirit”?

- Poor in spirit” signals that the topic of the poem is about **internal states**. Even though being “poor in spirit” is not a good position to be in (for many obvious reasons) Jesus’ perspective on this state is meant to provoke thought (and challenge the status quo)

Why does Jesus begin with “poor in spirit”?

It is difficult to understand the first line without understanding the whole poem (and vice versa)

The way each stanza concludes highlights the relation between the internal and external

Those longing for change show that the internal needs the external circumstances to change

Why does Jesus begin with “poor in spirit”?

Likewise, the end of the second stanza concludes by showing that the external pressures are strong (so people need to have a strong internal state to persevere)

According to Matthew

Jesus does not want people to become poor in spirit.

Jesus wants people to have internal strength (to have ample spirit).

Jesus wants to see the poor in spirit re-invigorated and helped.

Jesus honours them in the hope that we will too.

This is the kingdom in operation.

Kingdom sentiment manifesto

Respect
for the defeated
the bereaved
the dispossessed and the desperate
- This is the kingdom

Respect for those who show mercy
those who refuse dishonest gain
those who resolve hostility
those who keep doing what's right despite hostility
to themselves
- This is the kingdom

1 minute silence

prior to question time

question time